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PAGE 01 HANOI 02738 01 OF 03 130720Z
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	VC-00	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	ITC-01
	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	DCP-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OES-00
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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8078
INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HANOI 002738

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [FR](#) [VM](#) [CONS](#)
SUBJECT: GVN PRESIDENT REAFFIRMS STRONG RELATIONSHIP
- WITH FRANCE
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 HANOI 02738 01 OF 03 130720Z

REF: A. PARIS 7928 B. HANOI 2209

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. GVN OFFICIALS CHARACTERIZED PRESIDENT TRAN DUC LUONG'S OCTOBER 28-31 STATE VISIT TO FRANCE AS "SUCCESSFUL," MUCH ALONG THE LINES AS EMBASSY PARIS' EXCELLENT WRAP-UP (REF A). ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS HERE, FRANCE WOULD LIKE TO SEE VIETNAM "BE MORE FORCEFUL IN ITS REFORMS." OTHER ISSUES RAISED, IF BRIEFLY, INCLUDED HUMAN RIGHTS, TERRORISM, AND ADOPTIONS. SEVERAL FRENCH MINISTERIAL VISITS ARE LIKELY TO OCCUR DURING 2003. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) PRESIDENT LUONG'S TRIP TO FRANCE CAME AT THE TAIL END OF STATE VISITS TO IRAN, NAMIBIA, CONGO, AND ANGOLA, FOLLOWING LUONG'S PARTICIPATION EARLIER IN OCTOBER IN THE NINTH SUMMIT OF FRENCH-SPEAKING NATIONS IN BEIRUT, LEBANON. HIS VISIT WAS THE FIRST BY A GVN STATE PRESIDENT SINCE FRANCE AND VIETNAM ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IN 1973. LUONG'S LARGE ENTOURAGE INCLUDED ABOUT 100 GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS OFFICIALS, INCLUDING FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN DY NIEN, HEAD OF THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE NGUYEN VAN CHIEN, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT LE HUY NGO, MINISTER OF TRADE TRUONG DING TUYEN, MINISTER OF HEALTH TRAN THI TRUNG CHIEN, MINISTER OF POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS DO TRUNG TA, AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM BOTH STATE-OWNED AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISES. LUONG SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME IN PARIS, BUT WENT TO LYON FOR A DAY'S VISIT TO A PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY AND THE REGIONAL COUNCIL.

3. (SBU) FRENCH EMBASSY EMBOFF EMMANUEL FARCOT CLAIMED
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 HANOI 02738 01 OF 03 130720Z
THAT THE ABSENCE OF PREVIOUS STATE VISITS TO FRANCE OVER THE PAST THIRTY YEARS WAS NOT "PARTICULARLY UNUSUAL," GIVEN THAT ONLY "WITHIN THE LAST 10 YEARS" HAD VIETNAM AND FRANCE ENGAGED IN "MEANINGFUL" EXCHANGES AND PROGRAMS. PREVIOUS HIGH-EVEL VISITORS HAVE INCLUDED THEN-PRESIDENT MITTERAN IN 1993 AND PRESIDENT CHIRAC JUST BEFORE THE 197 FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT IN HANOI. ON THE VIETNAMESE SIDE, THEN-PRIME MINISTERS PHAM VAN DONG AND PIME MINISTER VO VAN KIET VISITED FRANCE IN 1977 ND 1993, RESPECTIVELY.

VITNAM A "PRIORITY"

4. (SU) ACCORDING TO FARCOT, FRANCE VIEWS VIETNAM AS A "PRIORITY" COUNTRY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. FRENCH BILATERAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH AMOUNTED TO ABOUT USD 70 MILLION IN 2001,

SUPPORTS PROJECTS IN: (1) LEGAL AND POLITICAL TRANSITION;
(2) RESEARCH FOR EDUCATION MODERNIZATION; (3) RURAL
DEVELOPMENT; AND, (4) POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND MEDICAL
ASSISTANCE (REF B). MUCH OF FRANCE'S ODA IS IN THE FORM OF
CONCESSIONAL LOANS, HOWEVER. FRANCE WILL LIKELY PROVIDE UP
TO USD 30 MILLION IN THE NEAR FUTURE AS A "LOAN" FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF THE PHU MY II POWER PLANT IN SOUTHERN
VIETNAM.

15. (U) ON THE INVESTMENT SIDE, FRANCE RANKS SIXTH AMONG
VIETNAM'S FOREIGN INVESTORS, WITH 120 PROJECTS CAPITALIZED
AT ABOUT USD TWO BILLION. (NOTE: IN COMPARISON, THE U.S.
RANKS 15TH, BUT MUCH US INVESTMENT COMES FROM US
SUBSIDIARIES IN THE REGION AND SHOWS UP AS THIRD COUNTRY
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 HANOI 02738 01 OF 03 130720Z
INVESTMENT, IN PARTICULAR FROM SINGAPORE. END NOTE). THERE
ARE NEARLY 200 FRENCH COMPANIES AND ENTERPRISES OPERATING IN
30 PROVINCES AND CITIES THROUGHOUT VIETNAM. FRENCH
INVESTMENTS FOCUS ON AVIATION (AIRBUS "COMPETES" WITH BOEING
FOR THE VIETNAM AIRLINES FLEET -- SEE PARA 9),
TELECOMMUNICATIONS, ENERGY, AND TOURISM. TWO-WAY TRADE IS
APPROXIMATELY USD 1.4 BILLION, WITH THE BALANCE (ABOUT 73
PERCENT) HEAVILY FAVORING VIETNAM. VIETNAM'S EXPORTS
INCLUDE FOOTWEAR, TEXTILES, AND AGRICULTURAL AS WELL AS FOOD
PRODUCTS, WHILE IT IMPORTS MACHINERY, APPLIANCES, AND
PHARMACEUTICALS FROM FRANCE.

16. (U) FRANCE AND VIETNAM STILL ENJOY SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL
TIES. FRANCE PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR THE ANNUAL HUE FESTIVAL
AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF OTHER CULTURAL EVENTS. THE NUMBER OF
FRENCH TOURISTS HAS INCREASED FROM 25,000 IN 1992 TO 80,000
IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 2002, ACCORDING TO THE US-
VIETNAM TRADE COUNCIL, MAKING FRANCE THE LARGEST SOURCE OF
TOURISTS AMONG EU MEMBER STATES. FRANCE PROVIDES
SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ABOUT 400 VIETNAMESE STUDENTS ANNUALLY.
APPROXIMATELY 400,000 VIETNAMESE -- MAINLY OLDER PEOPLE --
STILL SPEAK FRENCH. HOWEVER, AS DR. BUI HUY KHOAT, DIRECTOR
OF THE INSTITUTE OF EUROPEAN STUDIES OF THE NATIONAL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES, OBSERVED, "OLDER PEOPLE
LOOK TOWARDS FRANCE, THE MIDDLE AGED TOWARDS RUSSIA, AND THE
YOUNGER GENERATION TOWARDS THE US."

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ9610

PAGE 01 HANOI 02738 02 OF 03 130720Z
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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 03 HANOI 002738

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SENSITIVE

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PAGE 02 HANOI 02738 02 OF 03 130720Z

17. (SBU) FRANCE'S RESIDENT VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY, NUMBERING
ABOUT 300,000, ALSO MAINTAINS LINKS WITH VIETNAM. ACCORDING
TO EMBOFF FARCOT, THE FRANCO-VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY IS IN
GENERAL "FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARDS THE BILATERAL
RELATIONSHIP." SPECIFICALLY, FARCOT CITED THE "CONSIDERABLE
MORAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT" AMONG THESE RESIDENTS FOR THE
ESTABLISHMENT F A FRENCH-VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY IN HO CHI
MINH CTY. HE OPINED THAT, SINCE MOST OF THE VIETNAMESE HAD
LIVED IN FRANCE FOR A LONG TIME, THEY DIFFER FROM THE US-
BASED VIET KIEU COMMUNITY, WHICH IS COMPOSED MAINLY OF MORE
RECENT REFUGEES.

MEET AND SIGN

18. (U) DURING HIS VISIT, LUONG HELD A NUMBER OF MEETINGS WITH SENIOR FRENCH OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT CHIRAC, PRIME MINISTER JEAN PIERRE RAFFRIN, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN JEAN-LOUIS DEBRE, SENATE LEADER CHRISTIAN PONCELET, AND THE FRENCH PARLIAMENT'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER EDWARD BALLADUR.

19. (U) AGREEMENTS SIGNED DURING THE VISIT RELATED TO:

--VIETNAM'S PURCHASE OF FIVE A-321 AIRBUS AIRCRAFT, VALUED AT ABOUT USD 213 MILLION;
--ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOURNALISM TRAINING CENTER;
--CREATION OF A CENTER FOR INDUSTRIAL MAINTENANCE AT HANOI UNIVERSITY;

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 HANOI 02738 02 OF 03 130720Z
--TRAINING OF INSPECTORS AND MANAGERS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR;
--A PROJECT ON WATER SUPPLY AND HYGIENE IN RURAL AREAS;
--ESTABLISHMENT OF A FRENCH UNIVERSITY IN HO CHI MINH CITY;
--COOPERATION IN SOCIAL SCIENCES;
--A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR RESTORING THE LONG BIEN BRIDGE IN HANOI;
--SUPPORT FOR THE SECOND PHASE OF THE VIETNAM-FRANCE DIALOGUE FORUM ON ECONOMY AND FINANCE; AND,
--A FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT ON COOPERATION FOR STANDARDIZING HOSPITAL TREATMENT.

110. (U) TRINH DUC DU, MFA'S EUROPE II DIRECTOR, SAID THAT PRESIDENT CHIRAC HAD CONFIRMED TO PRESIDENT LUONG THAT FRANCE "HIGHLY APPRECIATES" THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. HE ALSO ASSURED LUONG OF FRANCE'S CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR VIETNAM'S ACCESSION TO THE WTO, A REMARK WIDELY REPORTED IN THE VIETNAMESE PRESS. DU NOTED THAT FRANCE HAD AGREED TO SUPPORT VIETNAM IN ITS BID FOR A UN SECURITY COUNCIL NON-PERMANENT SEAT IN 2008-2009.

PUSHING REFORM

111. (SBU) AT THE STATE DINNER FOR PRESIDENT LUONG, PRESIDENT CHIRAC CALLED ON VIETNAM "TO BE MORE AUDACIOUS" IN ITS REFORM EFFORTS, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF INCREASING GLOBALIZATION PRESSURES, ACCORDING TO MEDIA. (THIS COMMENT WAS NOT REPORTED IN THE STATE-CONTROLLED VIETNAMESE PRESS, HOWEVER.) EMBOFF FARCOT NOTED THAT "WE CONTINUE TO PUSH
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 HANOI 02738 02 OF 03 130720Z
VIETNAM TO ACCELERATE ITS ECONOMIC REFORMS," ESPECIALLY GIVEN THAT "SOME ELEMENTS" OF THE FRENCH BUSINESS COMMUNITY REMAIN "NERVOUS" ABOUT INVESTING IN VIETNAM. AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT, A FRENCH PRESS REPORT CITED VIETNAM'S BUREAUCRACY, CORRUPTION, AND THE "WEIGHT OF THE STATE" AS FACTORS DRIVING AWAY POTENTIAL INVESTORS. DR.KHOAT SAID SEPARATELY THAT PRESIDENT LUONG "WAS NOT SURPRISED TO HEAR CHIRAC'S COMMENT." DR. KHOAT, WHILE CALLING THE CONCERNS OF POTENTIAL FRENCH INVESTORS "UNDERSTANDABLE," NOTED THAT VIETNAM "CAN THANK FRANCE FOR SOME OF THE WORST ASPECTS OF THE FRENCH BUREAUCRACY."

HUMAN RIGHTS

112. (SBU) EMBOFF FARCOT SAID THAT THE FRENCH PARLIAMENTARIANS RAISED THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND PRESENTED THE GVN DELEGATION WITH A LIST OF "PRISONERS OF CONCERN" PREPARED BY THE FRENCH EMBASSY. HE NOTED THAT, WHILE FRANCE DOES NOT HAVE A SEPARATE HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE WITH VIETNAM, FRANCE "FULLY SUPPORTS" THE EU'S EFFORTS IN THIS AREA. THE MFA'S DU AND DR. KHOAT SAID SEPARATELY THAT HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY WERE MENTIONED ONLY BRIEFLY DURING THE VISIT, HOWEVER.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ9611

PAGE 01 HANOI 02738 03 OF 03 130721Z
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UNCLAS SECTION 03 OF 03 HANOI 002738

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 HANOI 02738 03 OF 03 130721Z

TERRORISM

13. (U) BOTH SIDES STATED THEIR COMMITMENT TO FIGHTING
TERRORISM. DURING THE VISIT, VIETNAM REITERATED ITS OFT-
STATED POSITION THAT ANTI-TERRORISM MEASURES AND
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION MUST CONFORM TO THE UN CHARTER AND
FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. ACCORDING TO A
VIETNAMESE PRESS REPORT, LUONG SPECIFICALLY "PROTESTED" ANY
ANTI-TERRORISM ACTIONS THAT "INTERFERE WITH THE INTERNAL
AFFAIRS OF INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES."

ADOPTIONS

14. (SBU) WHILE NOT REPORTED IN THE STATE-CONTROLLED LOCAL
MEDIA, THE ISSUE OF ADOPTIONS ALSO CAME UP DURING THE VISIT,
EMBOFF FARCOT AND DR. KHOAT SAID SEPARATELY. IT IS AN
"EMOTIONAL" ISSUE IN FRANCE, ACCORDING TO FARCOT, WHO NOTED
THAT, IN THE LATE 1990S, THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT BECAME
CONCERNED OVER STORIES ABOUT BABY TRAFFICKING AND CORRUPTION
IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS. THE TWO GOVERNMENTS SUBSEQUENTLY
SIGNED A BILATERAL AGREEMENT, THE RESULT OF WHICH WAS TO
BRING THE ADOPTION PROCESS VIRTUALLY TO A HALT, MUCH TO THE
CHAGRIN OF PROSPECTIVE PARENTS IN FRANCE. EMBOFF FARCOT
CONFIRMED THAT ONLY "10-15 BABIES WERE ADOPTED BY FRENCH
CITIZENS THIS PAST YEAR." DR. KHOAT EXPLAINED THAT THE
AGREEMENT WAS DESIGN TO REDUCE THE INFLUENCE OF PROVINCIAL
AUTHORITIES OVER THE ADOPTION PROCESS AND TO ELIMINATE

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 HANOI 02738 03 OF 03 130721Z
"CONTRIBUTIONS" MADE DIRECTLY FROM ADOPTION MIDDLEMEN TO
VIETNAMESE PROVINCIAL AGENCIES AND ADOPTION INSTITUTIONS.
EMBOFF FARCOT SEPARATELY CLAIMED THAT PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES
HAD PUT UP "MANY ROADBLOCKS" IN THE WAKE OF THE AGREEMENT.
(NOTE: CURRENTLY, ADOPTIVE PARENTS FROM MANY OTHER
COUNTRIES CAN MAKE SUCH "CONTRIBUTIONS." AS A RESULT, AT
THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL BABIES ARE NOW BEING DIRECTED TOWARDS
THOSE PARENTS AND AWAY FROM FRENCH PARENTS. ACCORDING TO A
2001 GVN DECREE, ALL COUNTRIES ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE A
BILATERAL ADOPTION AGREEMENT WITH VIETNAM BY JANUARY 2003.
THIS SHOULD EVENTUALLY RE-LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD. END
NOTE.)

WHAT'S NEXT?

15. (SBU) EMBOFF FARCOT SAID "SEVERAL" MINISTERIAL
VISITORS AR EXPECTED IN 2003, INCLUDING THE MINISTERS OF
TRADE, AGRICULTURE, AND JUSTICE. THE MFA'S DU CLAIMED NOT
TO KNOW OF ANY SPECIFIC PLANS FOR FUTURE SENIOR-LEVEL GVN
DELEGATIONS TO FRANCE, BUT NOTED SOME VISITS ARE "LIKELY" IN
BOTH DIRECTIONS.
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